

# The Voice by Galilee

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REV. D. S. GAGE, D. D.

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# The Voice by Galilee



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# The Voice by Galilee

A Study of John XXI.

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REV. D. S. GAGE, D. D.



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# The Voice by Galilee

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## I.

### PETER.

A very crooked stick was Peter, very tough, hard and knotted. Very unpromising material out of which to shape a world-shaking, spiritual Empire Builder. Let us study him a little.

He followed a rough, tough, coarse occupation,—fishing. Fishermen are not noted for their refinement, as a rule. He seems to have had but little education, for it is well attested that the Gospel of Mark is really the Gospel of Peter, written for him by Mark. No good reason can be assigned why Peter should have turned over this task to Mark, save that he felt that his equipment was insufficient. Nor would the fact that there are two Epistles which bear his name invalidate this, for in each case he might have also secured amanuenses. Certainly, it would seem, that he would not have allowed another to write the Life of his Beloved Lord had he felt himself equal to it.

He was changeable,—full of enthusiasm, which as speedily died away as it was readily roused. Conceited,—assuming to guide and instruct the Lord more than once, and setting himself above his fellow disciples, on several

occasions. Unstable,—ready with his promises of great things and failing in his performances. Quarrelsome, apparently, and ready with his fists, as witness his ready drawing of his sword on the night of the Betrayal. Profane, too, as witness how he cursed when he denied his Lord. All this, and even more, might be clearly drawn from the Gospels, nor would it be an unfair inference to suppose that the traits and habits which went with all these, and would ordinarily be found with men of his occupation, belonged also to him. Yet we need not surmise whether he was immoral, a drinker, etc., for we know enough to show us that he was undoubtedly anything but what we would call a “good” man, when the Lord called him to follow Him. Clearly, also, that most unpleasant of peoples, a busybody in other people’s matters. You could not trust him, for you never knew what to rely on of his ready professions. Plainly, a rough, swaggering, quick-tempered, profane, unreliable, fighting, conceited, ignorant man,—all this, and very likely worse. Had such a man, some coal miner, say,—joined one of our modern churches in a modern revival, people would have likely shaken their heads, and said that they were very glad he had “joined” but that they had their doubts as to whether he would “stick.” And, certainly, no one would

have thought him much of an accession to the Church,—a poor, low, ignorant, bad man.

If the Lord saw strength, solidity, tremendous but utterly untrained powers in this great, rude roisterer, it would be another evidence of His Divine insight. “He needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.” But though this might have been the case,—perhaps, was the case to some extent,—yet the most comforting, the most important, lesson in the Lord’s dealings with Peter would not be drawn from this fact. If one has fine qualities and capacities, dormant, latent, overpowered by lower traits, the strengthening of these till they become the dominant features of character is fine,—but what hope does it give those of us (unhappily, the great majority, perhaps) who lack these elements of strength? Do not the Lord’s dealings with Peter,—with *us*, if we will but let His wisdom work,—show that His Grace and Wisdom can CREATE what did not exist in us before? Why needs His Creative Power be limited to the time when Time began? To creating worlds, and not characters, which are far finer? Is it not possible that where faults and weaknesses were, His Wisdom and Grace can form powers and goodnesses? Indeed, do



not all His teachings point to this, that out of weakness we are made strong?

Two ways there seem to be in which this wondrous result is wrought, and each is full of hope, each leads to glory. He seems to outright change the character, in some regards, so that one is different.\* This, one must leave wholly to Him. What He thus does, He does, as seems to Him best. We can but be grateful. But, in the other, He graciously gives us a part, as His patient training, like that of a wise teacher, helps us to grow. Slowly, He shows us our faults so that we see that they *are* faults. And how ashamed we often are when things of which we were rather vain, suddenly appear in their reality. Peter, doubtless, rather prided himself on his fearlessness, but when he saw it as often merest of foolish rashness, he learned something. He perhaps was a little vain of his readiness to leap to the front with great intentions, but when he saw how poor a figure he cut later, when his enthusiasm died away,—perhaps, again, he learned something. So things of which we, too, might have been proud, we suddenly see as He sees them, and we are ashamed of our rash tongues, our follies,

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\*Of course, in all this, we are not speaking of His work of Regeneration, but of his development of character after Regeneration.

our foolish doings. And, faults which we did know of, but would not recognize how great they really were, these, also, He shows us as they are. And, on the other hand, we slowly find out many things we lack and then, too, we grow ashamed and ask Him to help us.

This is really a very wonderful thing, if one but realized it. For the growth of a fine trait of character, is the soul's putting forth a new power, a new beauty, a new source of strength and happiness, for all eternity. The blossoming of a wondrous bloom is a marvel; the development to perfection of a perfect fruit, a thing we watch with amaze. Infinitely more marvelous, the soul's development of a new strength, a new fineness, a new perfection. And how highly the Lord rates these fruitages of the Soul. Love, Joy, Honesty, Temperance, Brotherly Kindness, Charity, Purity, all that wonderful list, of what supernal value are they, all of them!

And how much more rapidly they might grow in some of us, if we *realized* that He is training us, developing us,—if we *realized* that ALL His dealings are thus intended. How few of us realize that every aggravating incident, every disagreeable task, all the every day round of life as well as every remarkable opportunity, all painful experiences of mind and body, a

cut to our self-esteem, a child's torn dress, the rooms to sweep, a splendid lecture, a fine book, anything, everything, are ALL MEANT TO TEACH US, to develop in us traits we do not possess, so that, slowly, it may be, but surely, He makes us out of our poverty, our folly, our weaknesses, to be stronger, like Peter.

“Who sweeps a room for the Master's cause,  
Makes the room and the action fine.”

And if we rose in the morning and went about all our daily work with these two thoughts in mind,—that this work was His Work, and therefore to be done with all patience and willingness,—and that it was also a day of opportunity,—another day, in which all that happened was a means of spiritual growth, how different all the days and their daily tasks would become.

We may never do Peter's great work,—oh, that is not the thing. We may never be pillars and apostles and leave an undying fame,—oh, that is not the thing, either, for which He is working;—but that you and I may become finer, nobler, purer, stronger;—may grow in Grace, may become by His Grace, that which we are not but ought to be. And of all the Apostles, Peter, I think, helps us most with this lesson of hope. For it is a HOPE,—think of it!—to

BE what He would have us to be, in some completer measure! What would one not give, (could he *thus* get it) to be really honest, really pure in mind, patient, strong, stable, really something fine in oneself?

We gladly pay money to be free of a tumor, a cancer, to heal ourselves of disease. How much would one pay, could he thus secure it, to be rid of selfishness, of cruelty, of high-handed conceit, of malice, of spitefulness, of things worse than even these? What is kindness of heart *worth*? What is peace of mind *worth*? What is it worth to be noble, strong, of finer and wider and truer vision, to have a mind set on things of real moral value? It hurts us to get rid of some of our physical diseases. It hurts, also, to be rid of our spiritual diseases. Not in our strength, but by His alone, is it wrought, but it IS, it CAN BE, wrought in us all, if it could be wrought in Peter. For Peter was not a strong man,—at the start, he was desperately weak. He had not admirable traits, he had despicable ones. But the Lord made him His friend, and made him a MAN.

## II.

### PETER GOES FISHING.

It was a sort of a "Call of the Wild" which pulled Peter back to his fishing. Full of energy, he was probably tired of inaction. He doubtless loved that hardy, wild, venturesome life on the blue waves, loved its storms, its rocking boats, its freedom. And, perhaps, though here one does not at all know, he and the others may have been wondering if the whole thing were not a failure,—if the Lord had any plan at all. It was very hard for them to renounce, mentally and deeply, their dream of an earthly Kingdom, to be set up to the accompaniment of all earthly splendors. They had become used to the thought that the Lord would not set up this Kingdom in this manner, during His *life*. They had heard Him foretell and explain His death. They had seen His terrible agony, had gone through all that dreadful time. But it is not unlikely that they still secretly hoped that now that *this* dreadful time was over, He would still suddenly display all that material power and glory of which the Jew had long dreamed. And He did not come back to life with angel legions, with power and battle, with rout of the hated Roman, with trumpet call of



the faithful from the ends of the earth, nor did He show any signs of any intention to thus display Himself. I think it likely that in disappointment, and under the influence of a sudden return of a longing for the old, free, and loved, if wicked, life, Peter did just what you and I often do, he said, "I am going fishing, again," and he went and the others went with him,—Thomas, the Doubter, Nathanael, Peter's former partners, James and John, and two others. In other words, he and they simply went back to the old life, and in so doing, he turned his back on the Lord and on the Lord's work. Not wholly, not really so intending,—not, perhaps, putting it that way to himself. Had anyone asked him if he were intending to entirely desert the Lord, he would certainly have indignantly denied it. Yet he was doing that very thing, to at least some degree.

This is exactly what you and I so often do. Getting a little tired of the whole thing, not seeing wonderful results, restless with waiting on the Lord, and feeling more strongly than usually the call of the old life, we say, "I am going fishing again" and *we* also go. We do not mean to completely desert or give up His work,—perhaps we are hardly conscious what we are doing, or what it means at bottom. But, it really means that we have gone back to the

life of the fisher for fish, instead of the life of the Fisher for Men. We have turned back to the world, be it only for a little time, as *we* think; be it only in a small matter, as *we* regard it.

Whenever we slacken in our Lord's work, just because we are tired of it, and want the pleasure of worldly things again; whenever we go off to some pursuit of merely worldly things, to the neglect of the better life; whenever we listen to the call of the coarser life; when we begin to doubt the utter value of it all;—in these, and many other ways, we, too, “go fishing.”

And a very sad thing about it is, that we nearly always, if not always, lead some one else off, fishing, with us, also.

### III.

#### THE VOICE BY GALILEE.

And like the Apostles, we also toil all night, and we catch nothing, but when the morning comes,—oh, Blessed Wisdom and Blessed Love, that will not let us go, we hear **THE VOICE BY GALILEE**, calling, “Children, have ye any meat?” And sadly, we answer “No.”

For the dear Lord had not the least intention of letting Peter and John and the rest stay fishing for good. He had called them to be fishers for Men, He would never again let them turn permanently to be fishers for fish, for merely things of the world. They did not in the least suspect that He knew what they were doing, but He did. They did not in the least suspect that He would come after them, but He came. And He always does so with us, when we go fishing. We do not realize that He knows where we are, but He does know. We hardly think that He is going to take the trouble to come and call us back, but He **NEVER** fails to come, when the morning dawns, and stand on the shores of the Sea, and call to us, “Children, have ye any meat?”

And, I think that this is the way He gen-

erally calls us back. In whatever way it be, He somehow makes us realize that after all our toil, after all our search and labor for the vain, worldly things we went fishing for, we have caught,—NOTHING. When we sadly realize the hollowness of it all, when we find out the meanness and baseness of this life, as compared with His work, when our backs ache for weariness, when the heart aches for loneliness, however, whenever, in whatever way it be that He sends the thought through our minds of the worthlessness of all that we have tried to get from the World, and we sadly realize that after all our night's toil we have no meat,—then has He called us back to His blessed labor, in which we never fail of the full catch.

Oh, blessed disappointments, blessed failures, blessed toil for naught, blessed weariness and lonesomeness and sadness, that call us to our Blessed Lord!

And in none of His dealings with us is His divine wisdom more clearly shown than when He stands on the shores of *our* Galilees, and calls "Children, have ye any meat?" He does not bring us back to His service by beginning with rebukes. He does not scold nor threaten nor bluster,—but He simply asks us if we have gained that for which we left Him. We leave His work, to become fishers for mere fish, for

that meat which perisheth, thinking, for the time, at least, that we will get something which is worth our while, and He simply asks us if we have gotten it. And, oh, how slow some of us are to realize and admit that we have toiled all the night and caught nothing! How stubbornly some of us go on fishing, toiling yet again and still longer, in the vain hope that we will catch something. So long as the glitter, the tinsel, the vain show, of the world, attract and hold our eyes, so long will we refuse to see and acknowledge the sad truth, but,—that question *will* still ring in the ears and echo in the heart, “Children, have ye any meat?” Though we pull our boat out farther from the shore that we may not hear His insistent calling; though we may pretend we do not hear His voice; or that we do not recognize Who it is that calleth us; though we may bend the back still more strenuously to the vain task; still ever and anon, in all sorts of ways, in all sorts of manners, at all sorts of times, the thoughts will come and come again, “Have I any meat?” “Is all this worth the while?” “Is this money worth what it cost me to get it?” “Is this pleasure worth its price?” “Is it worth my self-respect, my clear conscience, the hours of heart aches, the filth I have waded through,—is it, above all, worth what I have *lost*,—in



leaving my Lord?" "Have I, after all, any meat, or is it all but vanity and vexation of spirit? Will it all turn to Dead Sea apples in my mouth?"

And blessed is he who learns that nothing in life is worth while save the service of his dear Lord. Who learns that "life" is not wisely spent in going off fishing, but only in "following Him."

Oh, blessed Voice by Galilee! Blessed Voice, that never fails to call us when the morning dawns, "Children, have ye any meat?"

#### IV.

##### “LOVEST THOU ME?”

And when the Lord has called us from our foolish and fruitless fishing, not once, nor twice, but thrice, does He put to us a very searching question,—“Do you love Me?” And each time He asks us to *PROVE* it by *WORKING* for Him. “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” “Lord, thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love thee.” “Feed my sheep.”

He has endless ways of asking these questions. He may send the thought into some man's mind, that he has been too cross with his wife. Or that he is falling into a tendency to profanity. Or that one is becoming too self-indulgent, in something that hurts one's character and influence. Or that one is becoming lax in attendance on the outward forms of religion. Or that one is becoming lax in the inner heart of one's religious life. Or that one is becoming too fond of dress. Or some boy or girl may stop for a moment to realize that he or she is not as good to father or mother as one should be. Or a wife may realize that she is making home unpleasant for her husband with nagging temper, or extravagance, or whatever

it be. Or,—work it out for yourself,—you, alone, I, alone, know the secret, hidden quiet ways in which He is asking if we love Him, and if we say we do, you and I alone know the ways in which He asks us to prove it by doing this something which He wants us to do, which we know we ought to do, for His sake.

Then, with a start of surprise, perhaps, we realize that we had never dreamed that it was *by doing these things* that He was asking us if we loved *Him*. Why, there seemed other reasons why one should do *these* things. Are *these* the ways in which He is asking us to prove our love for *Him*? Why, one would think one should be kind to one's husband, or mother, because one loved *them*, not because one loved *Him*. And honest to your neighbor because one is well-disposed to one's neighbor. Right here, we and the world make one of the most vital mistakes of all life. Do we not know that **ALL** these things and all things that are right, should be done from *these* motives, if one please, of course,—from love to one's husband, or one's father or one's neighbor,—but also from **LOVE TO HIM**? And that this latter motive should be the **ALL-EMBRACING MOTIVE** of them all? The other motives,—good and right,—cover, each, but a narrow sphere of duty and life. Love to Him **COVERS**

# ALL OF OUR DUTY AND ALL OF OUR LIFE.

We are so apt to make the mistake of thinking that the religious life, the life of following the Lord, the life by which our love for Him is tested, consists only in going to church, to Sunday School, in studying the Bible, in our regular prayers, and,—here’s the mistake,—*in these alone*. These are a part, a very important part, an essential part, of the Christian’s life,—it would certainly be very weak without all of them,—but, after all, they are but the preparation, so to speak, for the real life. They are like the soldier’s drill before the battle, like the preparations for a journey. The real life is *simply one’s daily life*. Your “Christian Life,” the life in which you “Follow Him,” is just your daily life, which you are to *live for Him*. The things your daily tasks call you to do, the thoughts you think from hour to hour, your pleasures, your sorrows, all the rest, including your daily devotions, *these are your* Christian life, in living which you are to prove whether you love Him or not. I read the other day a rather angrily written article, in which the writer was bitterly finding fault with the churches, because, said he, if a thousand men were to volunteer for service, the churches would not know what to do with them. Foolish

mistake, of a man who in spite of all his apparent wide experience in Christian work, knows not the first letter of the lessons of life. All that would be necessary would be for each volunteer to be told to live his daily life as Christ would have him live it, guarding his temper, watching his words, keeping his thoughts on high and right things, and the Lord would speedily open the doors to all the service he could do. But it is just exactly these things which we so often regard as of small value or meaning, the doings of which in this or that manner we think makes but little difference. SUPREME MISTAKE. Mistake which perverts all of life, which destroys the whole meaning of the Saviour's teachings on life. I know a person widely known in church work, filling an important office, yet of spiteful and ugly temper, unkind in thought and word to those about her, making her family unhappy every day. "Mary, daughter of Elizabeth, lovest thou Me? If you loved Me, you would *feed* My sheep, you would not scold and lash them." I knew a man, also of wide reputation in the church, noted for his wisdom and judgment, who thought and said the most bitter, unkind, harsh things, about his associates and even his near friends, then wondered why he alienated some of them. "Thomas, son of Robert, lovest



thou Me? If you loved me, you would *feed* my sheep, you would not abuse and miscall them.” I know a man of active interest in the Lord’s work, and of excellent character in most ways, who, strange as it may seem, is slightly dishonest, his mind seeming to have a sort of twist, by which he persuades himself that he is justified in doing some not quite fair and open things. “Henry, son of Edward, lovest thou Me? If you loved Me, you would *feed* my sheep, you would not cheat or trick them.”

For this is the only way to prove love. And I cannot help but think that the Saviour is not wishing to find out for Himself about our love, for He knows quite well, as far as that is concerned. I think that He is wishing, in all this, that we shall *find out for ourselves, the truth about our pretended love*, whether it is really genuine, pure love, and not selfishness. For there is a love which really is seeking but its own gratification in loving. Love is a great joy, the greatest in the world, but it is easily possible to love merely for the sake of the joy of loving, and as soon as love is found to be only that, all its joy is gone, all its beauty is gone, and it is left grinning at us like some hideous face from which a mask has been torn. He would have us find out the truth about our own pretended love for Him. And Service for

Him is the first test of Love's reality. He who will not serve for a loved one has no "love," whatever other feelings he may have.

But why can't we just love Him, without all these hard conditions? Why cannot one just let his love flow freely, without proof and test? Why must one *prove* his love by feeding the sheep, by doing something for somebody? Why, my child, that IS LOVE. That is what Love is,—Service, Sacrifice, Suffering,—these three. Where any is absent, no love is. Where all are present, for the sake of something or somebody, *there* is love, for that something or somebody. All else is selfishness, in some form or other,—nothing else. Make no mistake as to that. All other so-called love is merely disguised selfishness or worse.

The Saviour so far has tested Peter only by the first,—Service,—but he at once adds the others, as we shall see.

## V.

### A TEST OF LOVE.

The Lord has now reached the point with Peter when He feels it safe to use the most searching, sharpest, most penetrating tests He had yet used in all His dealings with His weak, foolish, cowardly, boastful, disciple. He had three times forced on Peter's unwilling mind the truth that the test of his oft boasted love for his Master was WORK. It would not do merely to splash into the water to meet Him. This was no proof of love,—to leave the rest to pull the boat to shore. It would not do merely to loudly boast that *he* would never forsake the Lord, even though others should. The emptiness of this love was soon tested by the shameful profanity and cowardice with which he speedily denied his Lord. The Lord had shown *His* love, by taking him with Him to the Mount of Transfiguration, and he had spoken foolishness, not even having the sense to keep silence. The Lord had taken him with Him to the Garden of Gethsemane, and he had thrice fallen asleep. Yet the Lord's love was so great that He had not given him up, but was patiently working with him. It had hurt something in Peter when the Lord for the third time had

asked if he loved Him, but the Lord knew that this pain was for his good, and so thrice does He drive it home to him, that the first test, the first evidence of real love, Love that was LOVE, would be work, *work*, WORK, that, and that, *necessarily*.

Oh, how much like Peter we are. We, too, think that if our feelings are easily roused in a revival and we "take great interest in the meetings," that this is a proof of love for Him. Or if we really give quite liberally of our means as compared with some others, that this is a proof of our love. Or if we are very regular in all our "devotions," this is a proof. Or if we are "very active in the work of the Church," that this is a proof. I would not say that they are not. I merely assert quite steadfastly that they, these things, are no proof in themselves, at all, of real love for the Lord. Why not? Because they can all be done, they are often done, from some other motive than LOVE to the Lord. They may be done from excitement, you see, or from emotion, or because others are doing them, or from a desire for commendation, or from habit, or for the sake of gaining a high place in the Church, or from any of a hundred reasons, other than that of pure Love for the Lord. And because the Lord knew this, He refused, you see, to accept any of Peter's

impulsive manifestations of love, so-called, as proofs of real love. He said never a word about them. Peter might have said, "Why, Lord, see how I jumped into the water to get to you. I couldn't wait till the boat could be brought to the shore." "Remember that I was the only one to draw a sword to fight for You, when they were arresting You in the Garden." Rather startling, isn't it, that these things, and similar evidence which Peter might have mentioned, which *if we had done*, we would almost certainly have thought ought to have been noticed and praised at least a little, should have been passed over in silence by the Lord, who tells Peter, instead, that if he loves Him, there are some REAL proofs of it, and that the first one is WORK,—“Feed my sheep.”

But, one may say, isn't it better to do what is right, from habit, from excitement, from emotion, or what not, than not to do right at all, or to do the opposite? Why, yes, I suppose so. I am leaving out, of course, the cases of clear hypocrisy, such as the Pharisees, who did many things right enough, but whose motives were often so base that the Lord blasted them and their deeds with His fiercest accusations. I leave out, for example, the case of a missionary who would go to the Foreign Field because he would like to be and to be con-

sidered quite a "hero." But the Lord did not accuse Peter of such hypocrisy. He was warning him against a subtler temptation, as I think. Good habits are better than bad ones, always. To be excited and enthusiastic in a good cause is better than to be so in a wrong one,—there is simply no comparison between such cases. But the point is, that if one does the Lord's work, merely from emotion, his energy is but a proof of his emotional nature, and not necessarily of his love. If he works merely from habit, it is again a test of the strength of his habits, which, good and commendable, are not love. Or if one throws himself into the Lord's work from temporary excitement, it is certainly better than if he became excited and energetic on the side of evil, but, it is at bottom, only a test of how easily he could be excited, not of love. And if one objects that good habits, emotion and excitement on the right side, and all these other forms of activity, are a proof of the existence of love for the right, else they would have been found on the side of the wrong. I grant it at once, of course. But I am merely insisting, that *in so far* as one is claiming that their presence is a measure of the *strength of his love*, in so far he is wrong. *They are all of value*, they add to one's powers, no doubt, but let us never mistake *them* for love. This is



what the Lord was warning Peter against. Merely to splash into the water to quickly meet the Lord was not in itself a test of true love,—it left the others the task of bringing the boat to shore, you see, and therefore it was a thoughtlessly selfish thing for Peter to do, and love is never selfish. The Lord gave him not a word of commendation for it, you notice. It is like one who should run with gushing greetings to meet a guest and leave another the task of all the preparations for the comfort of that guest. One can find such cases very easily,—sham love, I think them all. The first test of Love, is Work,—Service,—you see, not emotion, not habit, not excitement, not impulse, not any of these things, though all of them may powerfully aid, but simple, plain “work,”—“Feed my sheep.” This test works both ways, you see. “If you love Me, prove it by working for Me.” “If you are working for Me, the test of the value of your work is whether you are doing it SOLELY from LOVE for Me.”

And to this other side of the test,—whether one is working for the Lord solely from love for Him, the tests of Sacrifice and Suffering, the Lord now advances. I said a little ways back that this was to be the most searching test of all, so far. Let us note what it is. Read verses 18 and 19. “Peter,” says the Lord, “I

am going to ask you to give all your life to My service. I promise you not one thing in reward, but a painful death at the end. You love your freedom. You are a heady and wilful man, and you do not like to be led, but you, if you love Me, must now simply follow me. And, *I am going to lead you to a cross.*” He did not ask Peter if he would follow Him. He refrained from further questioning, for, I think, He knew He had asked enough, but He did, at least, tell Peter what was before him and Peter did not turn back.

What if you or I, reader, knew that this was to be all our reward? In this life, at least? Could *you* work for Him, without a word of commendation from anybody, wholly unnoticed, even often blamed and hindered and opposed? Could *you* stand this test? Could you undertake to follow Him, all the rest of your life, not doing your own will, at all, but doing just what He wants you to do, and without any reward at all, save a painful death at the end? No offices in the Church, as your reward. No salary. No Chairmanship of Committees. No name in the papers. No praise on the lips of men. At the end, not a so-called heroic death on the cross, the death of a martyr,—but to die of Tuberculosis, or Cancer, or Typhoid Fever, or Rheumatism, or some other difficult and pain-

ful disease. Or to suffer any of those numberless “daily dyings,” some of which are harder than death, itself. To have a hard life, *all* your life, to live in poverty, and not murmur against the Lord or cease to do His Will, as He gave you Grace. To lie on a bed of pain for years or in physical helplessness, and still never cease to do His Will. To live with a husband whom you find hard to live with, and never cease to do His Will. To live with a wife who makes life almost intolerable, and still never fail to do the Lord’s Will. Could you do this, from love for Him? It is what He may ask, **IT IS WHAT HE DOES ASK**. Not, perhaps, in the precise forms mentioned above. *You* may have a happy home, and not be in poverty,—but in some form or other, He asks it. “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” Not, you see, take up his cross “occasionally,” but “daily.” Do you see your cross? Is it taken up, and are you carrying it, or is it lying neglected on the ground?

Are you keeping your house like a Christian woman? Are you running your business like a Christian? Are you meeting all the annoying, vexing things of your life, like a Christian? Are you sick? Then are you sick as a Christian should be sick? Are you rich or

poor? Then, are you rich or poor, as a Christian should be rich or poor? In the midst of it all, are you seeking His Will, and His, alone? And are you doing all your daily round of life, hard or easy, vexing or otherwise, *as you do it*, because you love Him? Think *how* you are living? And are you *thus* living, *because you LOVE HIM?* DOES ONE REALLY WISH ANY OTHER REWARD THAN JUST LOVE, ITSELF? “For the best part of a good man’s life, is just the little daily, nameless acts of unremembered love.” (But, I think, HE will *remember*.)

Could there be any more asked of love than the Lord asked of Peter? There seemed to remain a still more deeply penetrating, keener test;—at least, the Lord tries Peter again.

## VI.

“LORD, AND WHAT SHALL THIS MAN DO?”

Just why Peter turned around, I do not know. I wish I did know. But he did turn and saw John following. John was very different from Peter. He had his faults, and several times he received severe rebukes from the Lord's lips, but, after all, he was the “disciple whom the Lord loved,” the one who “leaned on His breast at supper,” the one whom the Lord had made His “friend,” (in the sense in which we use that word, I think), more than any other of the disciples. He had apparently that touch of sympathy, those traits which win the heart and affection, that unspoken understanding, and he won the Lord's human love and affection, till the Lord loved him as we would love an earthly friend. It was like the love of David and Jonathan, that rare thing between men, but which is all the more noble and precious because it is so rare. I have never ceased to thank the Lord for loving John in this way.

And now the difficult things that the Lord is requiring of Peter, and the fact that He is setting none of these difficult things before John, brings to the love of Peter the final and hardest test, so far as I am able to penetrate

into its nature,—the test which would try its perfect purity, its spotless whiteness, more than all else. He cannot refrain from asking the Lord what John must do. “Lord, and what shall this man do?” “You are asking from me a supreme sacrifice, asking more than I ever dreamed You would ask me, asking a depth of devotion, and an utterness of sacrifice, and a suffering which I never thought were going to be my hard and bitter cup. I *will* bear it, with Your help, dear Lord, for I have seen how much You love me. I have seen your Calvary Cross, and Your awful other sufferings, and I will suffer to the end for You, dear Lord, but must I be the only one to suffer and bear these hard things for Your sake? Shall not John do something? Must he not also feed Thy sheep and Thy lambs? Must he not *also* suffer and sacrifice? Is it fair that I must be the only one to have to suffer all this, and he have nothing to do or bear, dear Lord? Lord, and what shall this man do?”

Oh, Love Divine and Wisdom Divine,—Oh, Love so true that it can hurt and pain and wound for the sake of the loved one! *Truly*, far more *truly* than we know it, did the Lord know that LOVE can never become perfected save through sacrifice and pain, and that it is not perfect until it is wholly unselfish. To



bring out the uttermost in Peter, He must try him to the uttermost. Painful as it would be to him, (to both, perhaps), He must do it for Peter's sake. For never forget that *this was all for Peter's sake*. He will *not tell* Peter what John must do, or whether he must do anything or not. “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me.” “Never you mind, Peter, what John is to do. If I do not wish him to do a thing but simply wait quietly till I come, that is no concern of thine. If he is *not* to suffer, *not* to sacrifice, not to work for Me at all, that is none of your concern. Follow thou Me.”

*This* the reward of love that gives up all! **THIS**, the reward of Love that toils, that sacrifices, that suffers, even to the death, and asks no reward! One might suffer for One who had greatly suffered for you, but to be made to bear injustice, to see another who owed the Lord just as much, not asked to do or bear anything,—this is unjust. This *hurts* love, it would seem, instead of testing it. But just this test the Lord asked of Peter, and asks of you and me. Why? Because *perfect* love still loves in the face of all real or apparent ill-dealings on the part of the loved one. “Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him” is its cry, even to death. The wife still loving her

drunken husband; the mother still loving her wayward and neglectful son; the father and mother still loving a misguided daughter with a love that is stronger than death; the husband still loving through time and eternity the wife that had wronged him and wrecked his life; these are types of that love that still trusts Him, even though He slay.

Thanks be to His name, we know that He has not nor ever will desert us, or prove false to us. We have not nor ever will have such reasons for doubting *His* love, as even our dearest sometimes give us. Ah, if we can still love *them* with an undying love,—those who have given us sad reasons for doubting their fidelity,—why can we not love and trust *Him*, who has never broken a single promise?

Love which questions His wisdom, His faithfulness,—Love that is jealous, suspicious, doubting, is not the finest or best love. So He asks you and me to follow where He leads, and ask no questions nor hang back, because He seems to give us a harder lot than others.

Does your lot seem harder than that of another? Is your neighbor apparently bearing less for the Lord than you? Are you poor, another rich? Are you sick, another strong? Are you hard-worked, another taking it easy? Are you lowly in life, another high in “Society”?

Have you had severe trials and bitter heart-aches, and another few? Are you asking, as you watch Mrs. So-and-so, or Mr. So-and-so, why the Lord puts so many hard burdens on you and so few on them? Ah, you are asking Peter's old question, “Lord, and what shall this man do?” And did you ever get an answer to *your* question? Any more than Peter received an answer to his? No, nor will you ever. The Lord is too wise to tell you. “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me.” This is all He will ever tell you. And why? Oh, *can you not see that He wants PERFECT LOVE from you just as he wanted it from Peter?* Are you any less precious to Him than Peter? Is He not as anxious to develop all that is highest and finest in *you* as He was to develop it in Peter? Is there any reason why He can *not* do for your life and character, all that He did for Peter?

Think over this, will you not?

## VII.

### THE “MANY OTHER THINGS.”

“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.”

I like to think of the “many other things” which Jesus did. For, truly, the things which He did for Peter and the other disciples, as He lived with them, training them, developing them, making them from poor, weak, sinful, ignorant fishermen, into the greatest Saints, the greatest World-Changers, the greatest Conquerors, the world has ever seen,—these things He is doing for you and for me. He is taking your characters and mine, and He is training and developing us, as He remade them. And because He can not longer be with us, in the flesh, to talk with us, to answer our questions, to help our difficulties, He has left us these records of His ways to help our difficulties.

But let us notice two or three things, very briefly, so that when He comes to the shores of our Galilees, and His Voice calls to us, “Children, have ye any meat?” we shall not turn a deaf ear to Him.

Let us remember that no matter how sharp His words, the disciples *never talked back!* They did not argue, they did not dispute, they did not question, so far as we know. They did not go off, grumbling, either. Were there none who did? Ah, yes, many and many a one. Most of the Pharisees heard Him in this spirit, but what profit to them from His divine words? Are we Pharisees? Many of the disciples left Him, when His words became too searching. Are we going to leave Him? The rich young man went away, but he went sorrowing. Are you going to go away? If you do, you, too, will sorrow. But the Apostles, the ones who stayed with Him to the end and profited by His discipline, heard Him without gainsaying. So must we.

Then let us not forget that it is all for our sakes that He thus deals with us. And right along with this, let us never think of the dear Lord as doing this in any other spirit than that of the PERFECT LOVE which He is trying to develop in us. For, He already has that love, perfect, complete, for us. He did not speak to Peter with frown and rough tone, with harsh rebuke, or with anger, as would our rebukes and anger be. No, it is rather that when He said, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me," that

He said it with anxious heart, for very fear that Peter might not stand the test. When He the three times asked "Lovest thou Me?" with what sort of look do you suppose He turned His eyes on Peter? Ah, that divine look would surely have melted any heart. Is He not looking at you, at me, with that same look of wondrous love? If He asks you a hard task, does He not suffer "with you"? If He sees you in poverty, in hardship, in toils, does He not know it all? Does He not care?

Or, rather, perhaps, let us learn this lesson,—a lesson which I sometimes think is one of the hardest of all for us to learn—that perhaps he does not care much about all these things. That perhaps He is not concerned whether you are rich or poor, sick or well, having what the world calls an easy or a hard time, getting the rewards of this life or not getting them,—perhaps He is not much "concerned" in the sense in which we use that word, for if He were, probably He would see to it that we had all these things of worldly ease and comfort. No, but *what He is concerned about with INFINITE CONCERN*, is that in the midst of all these things, *you and I should be growing in character as He would have us grow!* This is why He will not let us go on about our fishing, and maybe get rich in worldly things, but why



He *will* come and stand on the shores of *our* Galilees, and call across the waves, "Children, have ye any meat?"

And then when it is hard to bear, remember, *remember*, that the Lord did not test Peter with these severer tests *till Peter was able to bear them!* Neither will he test you or me beyond what we are able to bear. If He had told Peter at the first all that He was later going to ask of Him, Peter might never have followed Him at all. If he told you and me right at the start all that the Way held for us, we, too, might not have had the courage or strength even to start. But, "as thy day, so shall thy strength be." Every test increases strength. "These light afflictions which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Then, let us remember that our Lord is not less wise and subtle than is our adversary. It is not necessarily in the so-called hard things of life that He tests our love. He may test one with wealth, testing whether one will love Him more than the wealth. He may test one with ease, testing whether one will love Him more than ease. It is not only a sign of His testing when He sends us the difficult, the painful, the unpleasant things of life, but just as entirely and certainly does He test us with the easy, the

pleasant, the rich things of life. Indeed, these may be *much harder* tests to bear. Oh, do not forget this. He has not *ceased* to discipline us, when He sends success, or wealth, or ease. Perhaps His real discipline has *then* only just *begun*.

And, if His tasks seem hard, if His Voice calls to supreme trials, then thank Him for His goodness, that He has made you worthy. Thank Him for His blessings that have made you *fit* to bear, *fit* to suffer, *fit* to sacrifice. He will not call you to a task and not make you able, in His strength, to do that task. He will not ask you to suffer for His sake, and not send the refining gifts of character.

And let us never for a moment think that all this has no special hope for us. Let us never for a moment think that what He wrought with Peter, is impossible with us or others. Ah, if the unwritten lives of His people could all be read, how many an unknown character, of purest gold, of finest texture, of noblest and most beautiful worth, would be revealed! In that hidden mountain cove, out on that far-stretching prairie, in that sky-scraper, across the street, on that street car, in yonder deep mine, out in your suburb, on the other side of the block, in that limousine, yonder, in that splendid palace, in your old home town, across

the ocean, everywhere, anywhere, unknown to you and me, perhaps, He is working His wonderful work, shaping lives of such wondrous beauty that all the Taj-Mahals, all the Alhambras, all the wonders of splendid grandeur in noblest scenery, all, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in them. No music so sweet as the music of their lives. No harmony so perfect as the harmony of their lives. No greatness like their moral greatness. No sublimity equal to the sublime heights of Moral Union with their God to which they are lifted. If you should see them, you might not know them. You might see some mother in calico dress and apron; some man in overalls; or he might be dressed in finest of linen and she might be wearing diamonds. We do not know them as we pass them, these handiworks of God.

Why should not one of them be *YOU?* or *ME?*

Oh, blessed consummation, to be *like Him!* Oh, dear trials which purify! Oh, dear sufferings which cleanse! Oh, dear toils which make me more like Him! Oh, welcome pain, that burns my dross away! Oh, glad burdens that increase my strength! Oh, welcome doors of opportunity; mountain tops of vision,—that lift me to my Lord! Welcome wealth, if it be wealth; poverty, if it be poverty; joy, if it be

joy; pain, if it be pain; so it be that all these lead me to my blessed Lord. Welcome dear daily task, washing the dishes, mending the torn clothes, washing the children's dear soiled faces! Welcome dear daily task, behind the counter, over the desk, out in the field! These are Thy Work, oh, Lord, oh, let me do it all for Thee.

And whenever I fail or grow weary or forgetful, and leave Thy Work to go fishing, oh, forget not to come *early* in the morn, as soon as it dawns, and let me hear Thy Voice, calling me from the shores of *my* Galilee, where I have toiled all the night and caught nothing,

“Child, have you any meat?”













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